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STATINTL

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write



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Vietnam

To The Christian Science Monitor:

A recent editorial points out a disturbing fact that all citizens of this country should ponder carefully. You point out that, whatever other benefits to the United States from President Nixon's summit meeting in Moscow might result, a significant step toward the end of the Indo-China war will not be one of them.

The same observation could be made about President Nixon's visit to Peking. Neither the Chinese leaders in February nor the Kremlin leaders in May have pressed Mr. Nixon to end American involvement in Southeast Asia.

These are some of the perplexing questions raised by Mr. Nixon's strategy of mining and blockading North Vietnamese waters and escalating the aerial and naval bombardment of the North Vietnamese countryside. Some other questions are: What happened to Nixon's "Vietnamization" policy, which was supposed to obviate the need for such large-scale American force? How could these efforts to interdict the flow of war supplies to Hanoi affect the present fighting in the northern provinces of South Vietnam? How would the devastation and suffering imposed on the North Vietnamese people succeed in making the leaders in Hanoi call off their offensive and comply with Mr. Nixon's conditions (including, especially, the release of our POWs)?

Accurate answers to all these questions are probably beyond the ken of anyone but Henry Kissinger or the President himself. But, even the private citizen can find some answers. Certainly the adoption of the mining and bombing strategy was President Nixon's admission that his Vietnamization policy has failed. And this strategy cannot immediately or in the foreseeable future affect the North Vietnamese offensive — even the Pentagon has admitted this. And a study of this strategy made by Mr. Kissinger for the President in 1969 (just published as National Security Study Memorandum No. 1) reveals that neither the Defense Department, the State Department, nor the CIA believed that this strategy would guarantee effective interdiction of the flow of war supplies to Hanoi.

As to the questions about the effects of the mining and bombing strategy on our relations with Peking and Moscow, it seems manifest now that no serious damage has been done. Chinese criticism of the American move has been merely routine stuff. The conspicuous success of the mission to Moscow — with a blizzard of treaties and agreements — provides the evidence that Soviet response is not hostile either.

Why not? Is it not because both Chinese and Soviet communism are prospering immensely from our perpetual involvement in Southeast Asia? While China and Russia have made a modest investment of advice and military hardware over the past seven years, the American commitment has been staggering — hundreds of billions of dollars, the lives of nearly 50,000 Americans, and the spiritual debilitation of the entire nation. To argue that our military presence in Southeast Asia is being reduced by troop withdrawals — as the President does — is disingenuous. Troop levels have been increased in Thailand, and they have not been greatly reduced in South Korea and the Philippines. How many Russian or Chinese troops have been sent to Vietnam, and how many have died there? And, it should be added, we have increased the number of Air Force planes and personnel for the accelerated bombing and we have increased the number of ships and naval personnel for the shelling and patrolling. How can this be called "winding down the war"?

While the United States is so deeply and directly involved in this hopeless struggle, the President makes deals and agreements with the leaders of the two major suppliers of war matériel to our "enemy." If he is serious about getting us out of the Indo-China war, what kind of leverage can he use in Peking and Moscow? Is not all the bargaining advantage on the other side? Or is Richard Nixon really trying to get us out of this war at all?

Macomb, Ill.

Norman A. Anderson